

DOUBTFUL METHODS OF PROMOTING PHARMACEUTICALS

Physicians always have been, and the general public is getting to be, "from Missouri" when it comes to the question of promoting new pharmaceutical and other "scientific discoveries" primarily through the public press, and particularly when there is a university's quasi endorsement behind the propaganda.

The new pharmaceutical, hexylresorcinol, may be all that the news story-writers claim for it—and it may not. Whatever is known about the drug is still in the experimental stage. To this all scientific writers whose opinion carry any great weight agree.

Detail men are pestering doctors in their offices by quite aggressive and intensive salesmanship propaganda in favor of this drug. The big talking point in this salesmanship is, that it came from Johns Hopkins University and presumably has the endorsement of that university. This we have been unable to confirm by correspondence between alumni of Johns Hopkins and the professors and heads of departments of that institution.

There is no more certain nor prompt method of destroying a worthless preparation, nor of permanently crippling the value of a good preparation, than by the "high-powered" salesmanship methods and newspaper propaganda being put forth in the interest of hexylresorcinol. Physicians everywhere resent the insult to their intelligence that they must submit to nowadays in the forceful talks so persistently presented by "detail men," some representing otherwise legitimate concerns, and others with similar methods representing those that are at best of questionable standing.

THEY KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING

The "home fires" are kept burning for every editor by authors on the one hand, and his editorial council on the other. Some authors, and particularly those of quite limited experience, often *resent* having their manuscripts declined; some not only resent such action, but salve their own hurt feelings by personal abuse of the editor—firewood for the home fires. On the other hand, members of the editorial council who act as confidential advisers to an editor occasionally, and quite properly, feel that he should be more discriminating than he sometimes is in what he accepts for publication. Many of these problems are interestingly analyzed in the recent autobiographies and trials and tribulations of editors by such experienced men as Stead, Mitchell, and Tooker.

Of importance in our own more restricted field are the following abstracts from letters from authors of declined manuscripts on one hand, and the confidential opinions of editorial councilors on the other hand.

One Author—"I was very angry when you declined my article on '—.' Upon reading it again after a lapse of some months, I believe you are right,

and that it would not be creditable as a part of my permanent record, nor to our Journal."

Another Author—"When I received my article back all marked up with corrections and suggestions, I was 'mad' and considered you presumptuous. After further study and a clean copy, I realize and appreciate the value of the work of the editors."

Another Author—"I am relieved that you have the impertinence to decline my article. I only sent it to help out, and will now send it to a journal with national circulation. You will not be bothered with more of my papers."

(Note—The article in question had already been declined by journals "with national circulation" before it was offered to CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE.)

Another Author—"Thank you for the splendid editorial work on my article on—"

Comment by members of the Editorial Council, which explains why some of these essays were declined:

One Manuscript—"I feel that this paper should not be published under any conditions. The few constructive points could be put in a brief report, omitting criticism of other authors and practitioners. We have too much destructive criticism."

Another Manuscript—"This paper has nothing to recommend it, and it would be very harmful if published."

Another Manuscript—"It is a privilege and a pleasure to co-operate with you in your splendid efforts to edit a high-grade medical journal. I feel that this manuscript contributes nothing new in its presentation and contains no attempt to compare the data with other reports in the literature. In short it is merely a case report without any effort to fix any significance to the clinical and post-mortem findings. Some value, of course, attaches to the publication of interesting case records; now and again some writer later on will collect such reports scattered in different journals and think out a story worth reading; but I doubt the advisability of publishing this manuscript in the type of journal you are editing. Your readers would not derive much stimulation from it. I am, of course, not casting any reflection on the accuracy of the reports as rendered, but the naked facts without appraisal and discussion afford but little interest to the average physician."

Another Manuscript—"I cannot see that this paper presents any material that is new or that has not been presented in far better style to our readers in the past. *It should not be published.* I do not know what your attitude is toward writers who send in papers partly typewritten and partly written by hand, full of corrections, and full of errors that need correction. Personally, I feel that if a man wants a paper published, he should send it in in such shape as he would present an essay competing for a prize, i. e., in as perfect typographical shape as he can command. In 1924 we spent over \$600 for authors' corrections. I would let the authors foot the bill."

Thus an editor is kept warm between two fires.